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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

WEEKLY SUMMARY

Special Report

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Sekou Toure's Guinea

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SECRET**SEKOU TOURE'S GUINEA**

The regime of Guinea's radical activist President Sekou Toure, now in its 12th year, is the oldest surviving government among the 29 black African countries that have made the transition from colony to independent state. Given the uniquely severe problems it faced at independence and the added difficulties brought on by some of Toure's policies, the regime's survival, security, and international prestige are no mean achievements. The cost has been heavy, however.

Toure started his country along an uncharted course in 1958 when Guinea, alone among the French African colonies, opted for immediate independence. The alternative would have been to join the new French Community, which De Gaulle had designed to maintain the hegemony France enjoyed in its sphere of Africa. Guinea's decision to become fully independent precipitated a break with France that was abrupt and painful. Paris withdrew its support and clearly indicated that it would like to see the Guinean experiment fail, lest Guinea's example prompt states still under French control to push for early independence. Moreover, De Gaulle took Toure's action as a personal affront. This further inhibited any reconciliation while the general remained in power.

President Toure has solved few of Guinea's basic problems; yet the power structure he fashioned has outlived those of such erstwhile radical allies as Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah and Mali's Modibo Keita as well as those of numerous less militant African leaders. Important to Toure's survival has been his ability to mold the Democratic Party of Guinea into one of Africa's most thoroughly organized and highly mobilized political parties. Other key factors are his tight control of the army and [redacted] political opponents.

Toure's political skills are also indicated by his ability to secure large amounts of foreign aid to soften the impact of his unproductive economic policies. During the 1960s, Guinea was one of the world's leading aid recipients on a per capita basis; Guinea, at present, is unique in black Africa in that its principal aid donors are the USSR, the US, and Communist China. It is doubtful that such high aid levels will be maintained throughout the 1970s, however, and Toure will be severely tested unless he can move Guinea's potentially rich economy off dead center.

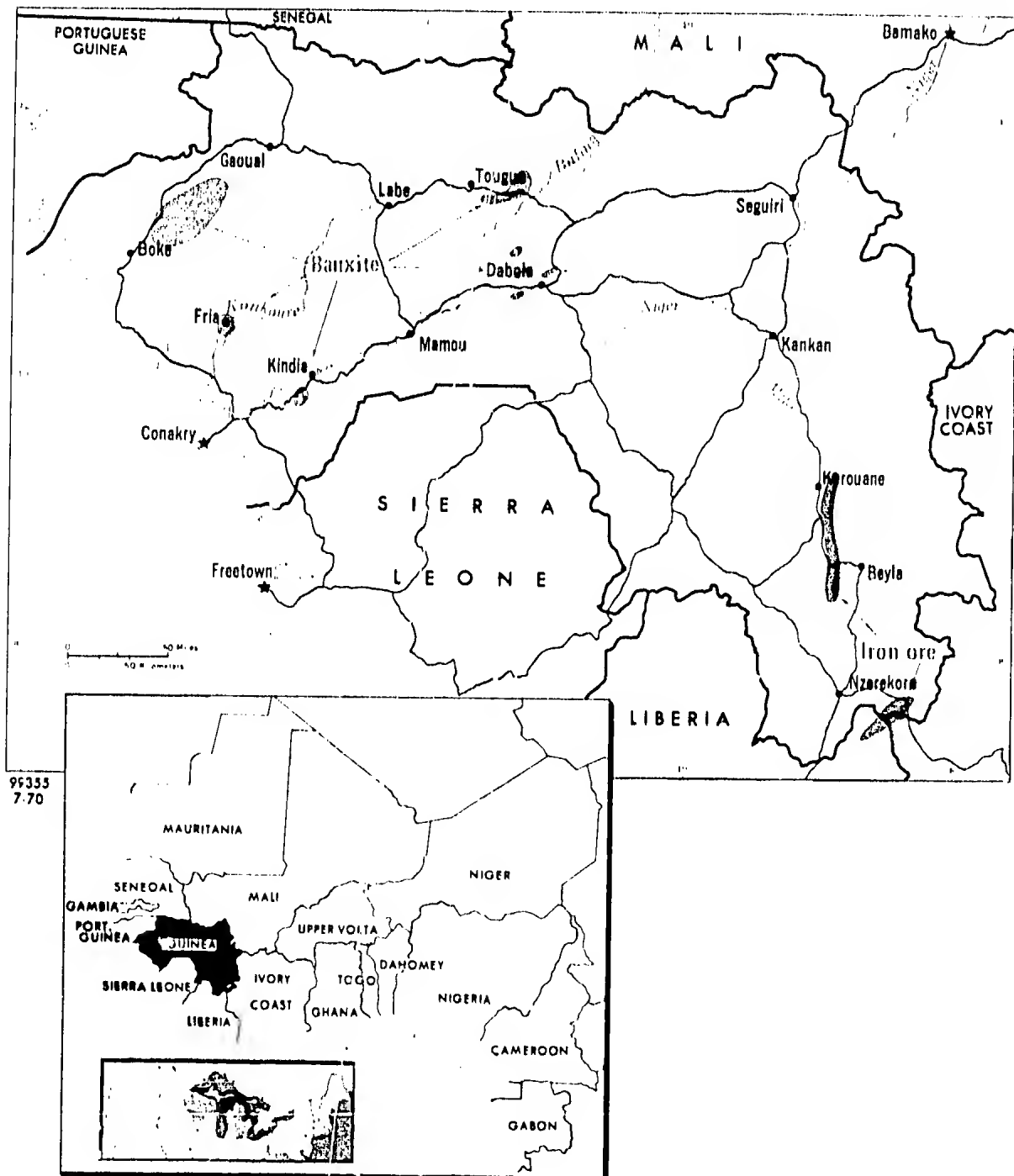


Sekou Ahmed Toure
President of Guinea

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The Rupture with France

We prefer to be poor in freedom than to be rich in slavery.

Sekou Toure

In addition to the problems common to any country emerging from colonial rule, the Toure regime also faced special difficulties arising from its radical ideology and its abrupt break with France. Unlike those who were to assume power in many other African states, Sekou Toure was not a member of the traditional elite who had cooperated with the colonial rulers. Primarily self-educated, he is a product of the early, Communist-influenced African labor movement. Toure's rise came not because of the French, but in spite of them. His strong nationalistic beliefs and his socialist policies couched in Marxist terms placed him on a collision course with France's African policy. This culminated in Guinea's "no" vote in the 1958 referendum on De Gaulle's proposed Franco-African Community. Toure argued that the new French scheme would perpetuate Paris' hegemony and impede African unity.

The consequences of this boldness were both quick and serious. French civil servants and official representation were immediately withdrawn. French budgetary aid was ended and, because of the uncertain political climate, many foreign businessmen transferred funds out of the country. Frictions arising from old tribal animosities also surfaced, adding to the uncertainty. The fact that Guinea, at independence, had only 40 university graduates provides further perspective on the plight it faced.

Both countries' oversensitivity to real or imagined slights, plus Guinea's withdrawal from the French-controlled African franc zone in 1960, precluded any real cooperation. Toure soon became convinced that France and her African client states, which attained formal independence in 1960, were plotting his overthrow. Although ambassadors were finally exchanged between Paris and Conakry in 1961, relations remained

troubled and were severed entirely in 1965 amid new charges by Toure of French covert involvement in efforts to overthrow his regime.

Twelve Difficult Years

Indeed, Africa and Guinea must not accept, to the detriment of respect for its personality, of its civilization, and of its own structures, becoming an organic extension of any ideological system.

Sekou Toure

Toure hoped at first that other Western nations would immediately fill the aid vacuum caused by French withdrawal. This hope was dashed when—out of deference to French sensitivity—Paris' Western allies delayed recognition of the new government. The Communist states, on the other hand, were encouraged by the leftist ideology of many of Guinea's leaders and moved quickly to exploit the situation. Diplomatic relations were established, substantial credits were offered, and trade was redirected from France toward the Communist states. With Communist advisers presiding over the socialization of the embryonic modern economy, Conakry had become heavily dependent on Communist aid by early 1961.

The Communist states, continuing to build on these early efforts, have developed an extensive presence. Communist credits and grants since independence now total \$288 million, of which \$144 million has been drawn. About 1,000 Communist technicians were in Guinea in mid-1970, a number that will probably increase inasmuch as both the Soviet Union and Communist China have recently agreed to undertake major new development programs. There are frequent exchanges of government and party delegations, and Guinean organizations for youth, women, and labor have regular contacts with their Communist counterparts. Conakry prominently supports the international activities of several Communist front organizations.

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Despite this close relationship, the Communist states have not escaped Toure's anger when he believed their activities threatened his position or infringed upon Guinea's independence. Two major crises in Soviet-Guinean relations have occurred, though neither seriously disrupted the flow of Soviet aid. In December 1961, Toure ordered the Soviet ambassador to leave because of his alleged involvement with Guinean teachers and students in antigovernment activities. Similarly, in 1969 Toure requested the Soviet ambassador's recall after learning of contacts between Soviet Embassy officials and individuals involved in an attempt to assassinate the President. Communist China, on the other hand, has had consistently good relations with the Guineans, who admire the unobtrusive and hard-working Chinese technicians, some 400 of whom are now in Guinea.

The 1961 crisis in Soviet-Guinean relations was followed by a general movement toward improved relations with the West, although Conakry stopped well short of abandoning its leftist stance in foreign affairs. Toure's attempts to reduce economic dependence on Communist states resulted in substantial US aid commitments in 1962. Relations with the US, as with the Soviets, have been marked by periods of trauma, however. The level of US aid gradually increased until 1966, but dropped sharply when a crisis erupted in US-Guinea relations and when the US introduced a new African aid policy favoring regional over bilateral aid. Since then, relations have steadily improved, but economic grants have not reached pre-crisis levels. Instead, most US aid has been in the form of long-term loans. Through 1969, the US had extended about \$107 million in economic assistance, of which \$25 million is a long-term loan granted in 1969 by the US Export-Import Bank.

On the African scene, political isolation has been a continuing problem. Close Communist ties have alienated Guinea from its more moderate neighbors. Conakry is consistently to the left of most African governments on questions of labor

policies and African unity. Moreover, withdrawal from the franc zone and establishment of an unbacked national currency have cut off regional trade.

Another alienating factor has been Toure's practice of harboring dissidents or exiles from other African countries. Most notable among these is Kwame Nkrumah, who was granted asylum following his ouster in 1966. His presence in Conakry continues to block any improvement in relations with Ghana's current government.

Economic Failure

Since the accession of Guinea to independence, the leaders of the movement have had to affirm the supremacy of political action in the leadership of the State of Guinea.

Sekou Toure

Although Guinea's economic potential is considerable—it reportedly has the third richest lode of bauxite in the world as well as rich iron ore deposits—economic stagnation has been one of the country's most severe problems over the past twelve years. A major contributing factor is the regime's insistence on the primacy of political goals. An important example is the adoption of the unbacked national currency, a step taken in 1960 because Toure believed it was required by Guinea's national independence and dignity. Despite the adverse economic effects, this currency is still retained for political reasons.

Another factor contributing to economic stagnation is the government's tight central control of the economy. This has resulted mainly in consumer shortages, inflation, and an extensive but inefficient government apparatus. Since independence, agricultural exports have remained about the same, while food imports have gone up. The increase of total output barely keeps pace with population growth; smuggling and black market activities are well developed. The domestic result of tight control has been more political repression rather than economic improvement. The extent of popular dissatisfaction is

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indicated by the number of Guineans who have emigrated to neighboring countries—estimates run as high as one sixth of the population.

In the hope of producing some economic momentum, Toure has turned increasingly toward private foreign investment despite his commitment to socialism. Private foreign investment in Guinean bauxite totals about \$260 million, with the US share accounting for about one half. At present, negotiations are under way with a consortium of private foreign firms that wants to exploit Guinea's iron ore deposits.

The failure of the regime's economic policies is causing strains within the leadership. Moderates want more pragmatic approaches while the more radical members—either believing their control or their revolutionary ideals threatened—stress ideological commitment. Discontent also exists among some of the younger party militants. At a party meeting last year, student leaders from Guinea's only university accused the leadership of ignoring corruption at the top and of betraying the revolution. The growing Western presence in Guinea's socialist economy lends substance to their charges of betrayal.

The Toure System

Supremacy having been given to the Party, nothing can work smoothly...where the Party suffers from...lack of authority.

From now on, no action of public nature can be taken without the authorization of the Party.

Sekou Toure

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Toure's ability to survive in the face of such severe problems lies in his charisma and courage, [redacted], his political and organizational skills, and his program's continued, albeit diminishing, popularity. He is without doubt the most prestigious and powerful man in Guinea. The 48-year-old President, one of the first organizers of the political and trade union

movement in Guinea, also gained considerable prestige at home and among African nationalists generally by his early break with France. Toure's subsequent inability to improve the standard of living for most Guineans or to advance his concept of African unity has diminished his prestige, however.

Although Toure denounces dogmatism, ideology—in the form of 15 volumes of his thoughts—plays an important role in Guinea. This emphasis on ideology strengthens the power of party leaders and renders the citizenry more responsive; it is also a source of solidarity in a country that had no history as a nation prior to 1958. More than most African leaders, Toure is committed ideologically to African unity, to a one-party system, and to state control of the economy. He regards capitalism as exploitive, creating harmful social divisions. Although Toure has allowed more and more private foreign investment, this is no more than expediency and has not altered his basic distrust of capitalist nations.

The President's political skills have been demonstrated by his success in merging Guinea's numerous tribal-based political parties into a strong centralized organization, the Democratic Party of Guinea (PDG). Following independence, the PDG moved to replace the traditional tribal leaders with party workers, under the guise of an attack on tribalism. This goal was popular among youth and women because they had a low status in traditional society and reform offered them new opportunities for advancement. Both groups remain among Toure's most staunch supporters. The PDG apparatus also was expanded in size and was given new duties, including distribution of rice and land. Although the depth of change is difficult to measure, the extent to which traditional institutions have been supplanted by party organs justifies Toure's claim of having engineered a radical revolution.

The basic unit of the PDG is its 8,000 base committees that function as a local government. The main links between the masses and the

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leadership, these base committees play a crucial role by explaining policy, organizing the people to carry out decrees, and, theoretically at least, keeping the leadership apprised of local views.

In contrast to many other West African leaders, Toure has had considerable success in bringing his security forces under party discipline. Toure's wariness of the military's potential was heightened in November 1968 by the coup against his ally, President Modibo Keita of Mali. Less than two months later, Toure launched a number of reforms aimed at strengthening his own position. Not only were political committees established in all major army units, but the army's professional role was downgraded by integrating soldiers into the civil service and assigning them economic as well as regular military duties. In early 1969, Toure announced the discovery of an antigovernment plot within the armed forces, and several officers were purged. Apparently cowed by such attacks, the military has not shown an inclination to challenge the President.

Political control is the primary function of the PDG, but the party has also been used as an instrument for social reform. For example, a 1968 meeting of party leaders launched Guinea's "cultural revolution." Although most programs usually contain more rhetoric than substance and evolve into devices to further solidify PDG control, some reforms have been accomplished over the years. Successes include some reduction in the divisive effects of tribalism, transformation of an inappropriate school system inherited from the French, and inclusion of women and youth in the cultural life of the nation.

Outlook

Despite the regime's unproductive economic policies and tendency toward repression, there is no evidence of an organized domestic threat to Toure's rule. The populace remains passive though considerably discontented, the military seem firmly under PDG control, and party organization remains solid.

Unless Toure produces economic results, however, internal strains will deepen. His present policy of seeking to provide economic momentum through foreign investment is politically dangerous. It risks strengthening technocrats, whom Toure distrusts, while leaving him vulnerable to criticism from the left. A current emphasis on more internal militancy is, in part, Toure's attempt to prevent exploitation of this contradiction by regime opponents.

The stability of Toure's government also hinges on a continued high level of foreign aid, particularly food shipments. Aid will be especially important until 1972, when new mining ventures are expected to provide some relief. A need for new aid sources probably contributed to Toure's decision in late 1969 to seek a political rapprochement with France and Ivory Coast—his primary political opponents. The Guinean initiatives have been met with cautious but positive responses in both Paris and Abidjan. Should a rapprochement develop, it would significantly advance Toure's efforts to end Guinea's economic and political isolation in Africa.

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